

- Federal Grant Will Save Educational Programs, Help Offset Huge Anticipated Future Property Tax Increase -

Goshen, NY - Standing outside the Highland Falls Middle School today, U.S. Representative John Hall (D-NY19) announced that he has secured \$1,500,000 in federal Impact Aid to save Highland Falls School District's education programs and offset projected future property tax increases needed to meet annual budget shortfalls.

"Highland Falls is in a special situation and desperately needs this federal money or else local taxpayers will face drastic property tax increases," said Hall.

The Highland Falls-Fort Montgomery Central School District, whose students include the children of West Point employees and local residents from Orange and Putnam Counties, is in a unique and highly impacted position due to West Point's ownership of land in the school district. Over 75 percent of the Highland Falls-Fort Montgomery Central School District's taxable land is owned by the federal government, and over 17% is comprised of state parklands, leaving only 7% available for taxation to support school funding requirements.

The school district is in need of immediate budgetary relief in order to continue educating its students and maintaining a full array of programs and staff. Earlier this year Hall identified possible financing for the school district within funds provided to the Department of Defense, and with the support of Senators Chuck Schumer and Hillary Clinton, he was able to secure a \$1.5 million grant for Highland Falls School District from the Department's Office of Economic Adjustment.

"When Congressman Hall visited Highland Falls Schools in the spring, he vowed to do everything he could to replace the Federal Department of Education dollars that we were shorted in our Impact Aid payment," said Roxanne Donnery, Highland Falls School Board Vice President. "He has done an incredible job in successfully securing \$1.5 million from the Department of Defense for us. It's gratifying that in such a short time Congressman Hall was able to not only comprehend the severity of the situation that faces the Highland Falls School District each year, but that he was able to do something about it."

Each year, the Highland Falls-Fort Montgomery Central School District faces tremendous budgetary strain due to its minimal tax base and limits on assistance from programs administered by the Department of Education. Without this assistance, the school district would continually be on the brink of budgetary disaster leading to drastically reduced programs and dramatically increased property tax rates. The need to pursue these extreme actions would significantly undermined the quality of education provided to the children of West Point's personnel and other local residents.

"As the men and women of West Point defend America, the last thing they should have to worry about is whether their children will receive a quality education," said Hall.

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